

# LEAD POISONING IN CHILDREN

## FACT SHEET



### **What are the effects of lead poisoning?**

Lead is poisonous and has no known purpose in the human body. Young children are most at risk to the poisonous effects of lead. Long-term exposure to even low levels of lead can cause irreversible learning difficulties, mental retardation, and delayed neurological and physical development.

Lead poisoning is a particularly dangerous public health threat because there may be no single signs or symptoms. Early symptoms of poisoning may include loss of appetite, fatigue, irritability, anemia, and abdominal pain. Because of the general nature of symptoms at this stage, lead poisoning is often not suspected.

### **How do you prevent lead exposure in children?**

A child is at greatest risk if he or she lives in an older home. Older homes often contain lead-based paint. Lead may contaminate dust and be ingested when dirty hands or other non-food items come in contact with the mouth. If parents believe a child has been exposed, they should talk to the child's pediatrician or their health care provider and have the child tested.

Guidelines for protection include:

1. Frequently wash hands, pacifier, toys and other items that may go in the mouth.
2. Feed children nutritious low-fat meals high in calcium and iron.
3. Flush water from tap for two minutes before drinking.
4. Use cold tap water to prepare baby formula.
5. Do not allow children or pets to play in dirt within three feet of the house's foundation.
6. Wipe dust from horizontal surfaces (counters, tables or floors) with a wet cloth or mop.
7. Use a doormat to wipe feet or remove shoes to keep dust out of the house.
8. Remove imported vinyl mini blinds from areas frequented by small children.
9. Follow the guidelines listed below to prevent bringing lead home from work.

### **How do you keep from bringing lead home from work?**

1. Use separate work clothes and shoes while at work.
2. Keep street clothes in a clean place.
3. Shower at work before going home.
4. Launder work clothes at work. If you take clothes home, wash and dry them separately.

### **Are there other sources of lead in the home?**

Hobbies:

- Making stained glass windows using lead solder
- Glazing and firing pottery and ceramics
- Making lead weights
- Reloading and making ammunition
- Target practice on indoor and outdoor firing ranges
- Refinishing furniture
- Remolding

Home Remedies:

- Azarcon and greta are bright colored powders containing almost 100 percent lead. They are often used within the Hispanic community and are given to children with intestinal illness.
- Pay-loo-ah is a red or orange powder used within the Hmong community and given to children as a cure for rash or fever.
- Ghasard, Bala Goli, and Kandu are Asian Indian remedies used for stomachaches.
- Kohl or surma are used by Arab communities for cosmetic and medicinal purposes.

### **Where is blood lead testing done?**

Parents who want their children tested should contact a pediatrician or health care provider.

### **For More Information Call:**

The Louisville Metro Health Department  
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program  
502-574-6644